

job. He was asked to serve his country in a new capacity and brought with him a great sense of honor and duty. In this time of war, Jim has worked tirelessly to ensure that the VA meet the current needs of those veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Although there is great urgency in caring for our recently wounded service men and women, Jim has also understood the crucial need to continue to provide the utmost care for our veterans and warriors of past generations. Under his leadership, the VA has earned higher marks for medical services than the private health care industry for customer satisfaction, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index, for the seventh consecutive year. He has helped to give all our veterans the care they deserve, as they have sacrificed so much for all of us.

I have personally worked with Jim for years. I would especially like to thank him for the instrumental role he played in reinvigorating the construction of a new VA hospital in Aurora on the Fitzsimons campus. Without his support, this project would not have progressed to the point it is at today. This hospital will prove to be a great asset for our veterans in Colorado, and Secretary Nicholson should be commended for his efforts.

As we celebrate the service of Secretary Nicholson, I had also like to take this opportunity to thank his family, notably his wife Suzanne, whose endless support is undoubtedly valued and is greatly appreciated. Jim Nicholson has served this country with honor and valor in many capacities. I will certainly miss Secretary Nicholson, and wish him and his family the best of luck in the future. I thank him for his exceptional service on behalf of all our veterans.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. ARMY SPACE AND MISSILE DEFENSE COMMAND

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I recognize the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, an organization that is headquartered in Huntsville, AL.

On this day, October 3, 1957, the Army activated the Redstone Anti-Missile Missile Systems Office. With a staff of 5 military and 19 civilians, this organization set the foundation of the Army's space and missile defense programs. From these beginnings, they have become an international organization of more than 2,000 military and civilians devoted to providing around-the-clock space and missile defense research and development and operational capabilities. I wish to express my congratulations to the Army community in northern Alabama for their splendid record of achievement in space and missile defense and to ask my colleagues to join me in saluting them for their contributions to the security of our Nation and her warfighters.

This organization and the U.S. Army have led the Nation in space and missile defense from the 1957 authorization to proceed with the Nike Zeus system to the deployed hit-to-kill national and theater missile defense systems today. Along the way, the Army's missile defense team has achieved a number of significant milestones: the first successful intercept of an intercontinental ballistic missile, ICBM, in 1962; the first deployed ballistic missile defense system in the United States in 1975; the first non-nuclear intercept of an ICBM in 1984; the first kinetic energy intercept of a tactical missile in 1987; and the first directed energy intercepts of rockets in flight in 1996. Their battletested products are currently deployed around the world defending our Nation, our service members, and our allies.

In 1957, missile defense brought a new facet to the Army's exploration of space in the 1950s. As missions changed, it remained constant. In the 1970s, the Army returned to space exploration with a precedent setting tactical exploration program. From the 1970s through Operation Desert Storm, the first space war, space has become an integral element of the warfighter's life. Since then, this organization has become the focal point for Army Space. They provide research and development to expand the possibilities provided by space. They have established a brigade of space soldiers dedicated to space superiority and the application of space technology. And today, space soldiers and technologies continue to provide battlefield communications, satellite imagery and analysis, three-dimensional visualization, guidance information, precise early warning of threat missiles, and a host of other space-based capabilities tailored for the warfighter.

Together with their Government and industry teammates, the future of space and missile defense rests in the hands of the men and women who work in this Army organization in Huntsville and Colorado Springs, as well as other locations throughout the world.

Mr. President, I salute Huntsville, the surrounding area, and the hard-working men and women of this great region of our country. Most importantly, I wish to extend a warm and hearty congratulations to the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command team for a job well done, and best wishes for its continued success during the next 50 years and beyond. Secure the high ground.

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, this past Saturday was National Public Lands Day. On September 29, hundreds of thousands of citizens from across the country volunteered to give their time to improve our public lands. These volunteers cleared obstructed trails, picked up litter, planted trees, removed invasive species, and taught

young Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts about camping. I commend all volunteers for their commitment.

Now in its 14th year, National Public Lands Day has become the largest grassroots volunteer effort on behalf of our public parks, rivers, lakes, forests, rangelands, and beaches. Last year, an estimated \$11 million worth of labor intensive work was carried out, and this year it is expected that \$12 million of improvements were added to America's public lands.

On Wednesday, September 27, the front page of USA Today displayed a picture of Coeur d'Alene, ID, with a headline that read "No end in sight for Idaho's growth." The article went on to provide a breakdown of how Idaho's economy has remained strong despite the current slump in the housing market. It reads, "[An] ingredient in Idaho's boom has been the 'amenities business'—hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing, whitewater rafting—that attracts tourists and new residents, from billionaires to young outdoor enthusiasts."

Today Idaho is experiencing a new brand of tourists and a new brand of neighbors moving in down the street. These people are focused on the vigorous quest for a quality of life that includes the enjoyment of the outdoors. What ties the third generation Idahoan to a newcomer is an appreciation for the resources and the value that multiple uses contribute to our livelihoods and communities.

The USA Today article also points out that "[t]he federal government owns about two-thirds of the land in Idaho, mostly national forests. The state has 21 million acres of roadless wilderness, about the size of South Carolina and more than any state except Alaska." Public lands have much to offer and are very beneficial for Idaho.

There are a myriad of different resources that can be responsibly harvested or extracted from our public lands. From sustainably managed forests to livestock use to oil and geothermal potential, these lands hold the resources Americans rely on to achieve the standard of living that we have today.

Using the resources on our own public lands, as opposed to relying on foreign resources, affords us the opportunity to fund schools, highways, and national defense, all the while easing the financial burden on the taxpayers.

There are those, however, who would prefer to see land management agencies take more of a preservationist role, prohibiting access to our national forests, parks, beaches, and rangelands and leaving nature to run its course. This is not a value that many Idahoans hold, and neither do I.

We must actively manage our lands so that the recreational and resource benefit can be utilized by every American citizen. Under certain circumstances, active management includes limited access in specific areas;